

and effectively as possible; and, hopefully, the President will sign them. They've passed with an average of 285 votes, some closer, some different than that. Averages lie in that respect. But they have passed pretty handily both Houses of the Congress. In the Senate every one has passed with a veto-proof majority. That's not true in the House. But we're hopeful that we can get these bills to the President and signed by the President, whether they're individually or in packages.

Mr. BLUNT. I thank my friend.

Looking backwards at this, I think that my friend is right that there was a pattern that developed with the bill that included the Veterans bill that we didn't like. And so in the Congress that started in 2005, we tried to restructure that so that that would not happen in the future. We were trying to break that pattern, and, in fact, we did. And in 2005, that bill passed individually, as did every other bill.

In 2006, unfortunately, that was not the case, and there was a penalty to be paid for that, and I guess we paid it. But we were trying to break that pattern of coupling veterans benefits with something that was much more controversial than veterans benefits. It was part of at that time Veterans Administration and Housing and Urban Development, and so we took Veterans and put them with the Military Construction so that military families, military personnel, veterans and retirees would all be in a bill that we hoped would be the least controversial of all bills and not be the subject of that packaging to get those most controversial things done. Frankly, I think the 2005 experience showed that we were on the way to achieving that.

My concern on this would be exactly that, that the pattern of using the veterans benefit bill, to couple that with bills that are less popular, and not only appropriations bills, but I can certainly see, even in this Congress, that bill becoming the host for authorizing bills that are not popular, I think is a very unfortunate development and I regret it. I wish that we could have stayed with the pattern that we tried to create in the last Congress and successfully did create in the first year of the last Congress. Again, as we look back on history, this is the first time in 20 years that not a single bill has passed now.

Also, when we coupled bills together in the 10 years I was here, we coupled those bills together to try to get a signature rather than anticipating a veto, and we got those signatures.

Mr. HOYER. Is there any doubt that that's what we're trying to do?

Mr. BLUNT. I think there is. Well, we'll see if that's what happened.

I have a couple more questions, but I would yield on that point.

Mr. HOYER. On that point, because I think it's important for our Members to understand and for the public to understand what's going on. The gen-

tleman is correct. You took the Veterans bill out of the Housing bill. We think you liked the Veterans bill. We're not sure you liked the Housing bill, and so you took them apart so you could pass what you liked and leave what you didn't like alone.

As you know, the first 2 months that we came in, we dealt with the eight bills that you had not passed. They were all domestic bills. You passed the Defense bill, the MilCon bill, Homeland Security bill, all of that, broad bipartisan support on our side, your side. Education was left on the table. Health was left on the table. Environment, left on the table. Space, left on the table. Law enforcement, left on the table.

We understand the decoupling. Decoupling is to put us in a position where we don't have any options. You'll take what was passed with 409 votes in this House. It was \$4 billion over what the President requested, billions of dollars under what the veterans said they needed.

And now the President says he is going to sign that bill. Why is he going to sign that bill? Because I think he believes it's politically feasible to do it. It's \$4 billion over what the President asked for, and he said we shouldn't ask for more than he asked for. We asked for \$4 billion more than he asked for for veterans, and he's going to sign it. Overwhelmingly supported here in the House, and we would override his veto. He knows that, so I don't think he's given us much, very frankly.

And we are trying to figure out how we can get Education signed by the President, funding No Child Left Behind signed by the President, NIH, cancer research, heart, lung and blood research, diabetes research signed by the President.

So very frankly, your decoupling was to make sure that you got the bill you liked signed. Our coupling may be to ensure that we get the bill that we like signed. So very frankly, the efforts, I think, are the same. The priorities just may be different.

Mr. BLUNT. Well, if we want to try to determine the motives of each other, which is, I suppose, what we do in this place, that's one thing. But you're the one that started that.

What we were trying to do, I'll advance again, was to take the Veterans bill out of the tug of war that always went on over the Housing bill, and that's what we did.

Now, your assertion that that's because we didn't like Housing, I don't agree with that. I do agree with the idea that we thought that the Veterans bill did not need to be needlessly held back by a bill that was assured to always be intensely debated. And that's why we did that. And that's why we passed the bill. And that's why if we would have passed this bill 60 days ago when it came over from the Senate, military families and veterans would have \$18.5 million every day that they haven't had the last 32 days now.

On the other issue, I don't have any reason to believe that the President is

not for all of those health care issues you talked about. That's not what this veto will be about. I know I'm for advancing all of those, partly because I've benefited from research in some of those.

But I think you said at the first of the year, and you were right when you said it, that the best way to advance these bills is one at a time. Now, I think I'm hearing a different argument than that today. But I agree with your first-of-the-year view of this; and I would hope, after this process, we can get back to that.

Another thing I wanted to ask about, I read in one of the Capitol Hill newspapers this week that the majority continues to look at the possibility of limiting the minority's right, and it has been a right of the minority since 1822, to have the opportunity to have a motion to recommit at the end of the bill.

I will point out, I believe yesterday, on the bill we dealt with yesterday, the first substitute that the minority had been allowed in this entire Congress, the last day of the 10th month of the Congress, we finally get a substitute.

No question, we've had to maximize our use of the motion to recommit because, while we appreciate the amendments we had on the bill today, we haven't had many amendments before today. And while we appreciate the substitute we had yesterday, we had had no substitutes before yesterday.

I'm wondering if the gentleman will want to talk a little bit about any discussions going on, the majority has going on, about limiting the 1822 right of the motion to recommit.

And I would yield.

Mr. HOYER. I thank the gentleman.

I don't have the figure in front of me, but I will find it out. I believe, very frankly, very few substitutes have been brought to the Rules Committee by your side. But that aside, I will get that number so we will know it.

But I take your point. That aside, I take your point.

Let me say that what we intend to do is continue to try to facilitate the work of this House, facilitate passing legislation, and we will continue to try to do that.

Mr. BLUNT. Well, I would only say my concern on that would be when the majority says "facilitate the work of the House," that may mean to further restrict the ability of the minority; and, of course, we would object strenuously to that.

Another topic that, I don't believe, it may or may not have been mentioned, was the AMT patch topic. Did you mention that as something you expect to come up next week?

Mr. HOYER. Yes, I think I mentioned that.

Mr. BLUNT. I thought maybe you did. Does the gentleman have any more information about that than he has already given?

Mr. HOYER. No, I don't know whether it will be Wednesday, Thursday or